

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 10- 12 are currently pending in this application. Claim 12 is cancelled herein. Claim 1 is amended herein. No new matter has been added by this amendment.

In the last Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 4, 7, and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 8-131215 in view of *Krauss*. The Examiner also rejected claim 8 under 35 U.S.C § 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 8-131215 in view of *Krauss*, and further in view of *Ilsenmann*. Claims 10 and 11 are objected to as depending from a rejected base claim, but the Examiner indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejections.

Amended claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over the cited art in that it recites, for example, a buckle having butting portions including straight portions and a concave portion or a convex portion, which are formed on at least one surface of the front and rear surfaces of the female body or the male body; and butting portions including straight portions, which are formed on the right and left side faces and continuous to the straight portions of said butting portions including the straight portions and the concave portion or the convex portion, and at least one straight portion, which is formed on the other surface of the front and rear surfaces and is continuous to the straight portions formed on the right and left side faces, when the female body engages with the male body, wherein the concave portion or the convex portion is formed at a center of the butting portions sandwiched by the straight portions, the convex portion in the butting

portions protrudes in a trapezoidal form in which a front end is slightly narrowed, while the concave portion is concavely dented in the trapezoidal form with the inlet expanded, peripheral corners of the straight portions on the front and rear surfaces continuous from the concave portion or the convex portion formed at the center of the female body or the male body and peripheral corners of the straight portions on the right and left side faces are notched so as to form a one level lower stepped portion, which is capable of being fitted into the butting portion of the female body or the male body in a manner of overlapping.

Specifically, amended claim 1 recites that a stepped portion is provided at each of the butting portions so that when engaging the female and male bodies, the butting portions are fitted into the mating corresponding butting portions comprising the straight portions and the concave or convex portion. Thus, all of the respective butting portions are butted straightly through a bending portion and contacted closely when the female and male bodies are engaged. In addition, when engaged, all of the butting portions on the front and rear surfaces and the right and left side faces of the female and male bodies are attached by fitting them together through the stepped portion. As a result, stable interengagement is provided in both the horizontal and lateral directions. Moreover, as recited in amended claim 1, the trapezoidal shape is provided at the convex and concave portions, which are located on the front and/or rear surfaces, while straight butting portions are located on the side surfaces.

The cited prior art does not disclose these features. Specifically, JP 8-131215, *Krauss*, and *Isenmann*, either alone or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest that a stepped portion is provided on all of the butting portions on the front and rear surfaces

and the right and left side faces of the female and male bodies. Moreover, none of the cited art, either alone or in combination, discloses or suggests trapezoidal shaped convex and concave butting portions on the front and/or rear surfaces. And, finally, none of the cited art, either alone or in combination, provides stable interengagement in both the horizontal and lateral directions. Thus, for at least these reasons, amended claim 1, as well as claims 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, and 11 which depend therefrom, are allowable over the cited art.

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, and 11 in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that the proposed amendment of claim 1 does not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Furthermore, Applicants respectfully point out that the final action by the Examiner presented some new arguments as to the application of the art against Applicants' invention. It is respectfully submitted that the entering of the Amendment would allow the Applicants to reply to the final rejections and place the application in condition for allowance.

Finally, Applicants submit that the entry of the amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

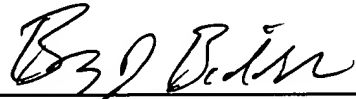
In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants submit that this claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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